

CATHOLIC



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Club Issue

SELL 'EM BLUE SKY • "CHURCH" A NEW PLAY
CATHOLIC EDUCATION AND DRAMA • CONVENTION
LABORATORY THEATRE • UNDER THE MARQUEE

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THEATRE

Catholic Theatre Conference

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WASHINGTON, D. C.

CATHOLIC THEATRE

—OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF—

THE CATHOLIC THEATRE CONFERENCE

E. FRANCIS McDEVITT, *Editor*

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VOLUME II

NOVEMBER, 1939

NUMBER II

NEARER THE GOAL—WE PRAY

TO PARAPHRASE shamelessly: CATHOLIC THEATRE is here again! In preparing this Autumn, 1939, issue of CATHOLIC THEATRE we have hoped and prayed it would be welcomed and greeted warmly as an old friend again faring forth from the penumbra of half-forgotten things and not received chidingly as an unforgivable prodigal. In any case, we can assure our readers we have not been living riotously and lavishly in idleness and luxury during our Editorial absence and approximate the prodigal only in that we at Conference headquarters have been feeding throughout our withdrawal from the publication world on the husks lying in an empty treasury. We hasten to add that this vacuity has resembled the virginal bareness of the proverbial Hubbard cupboard and not the slough of the sty.

We feel reasonably able now, however, to promise that further lapses in the publication schedule of CATHOLIC THEATRE will not occur again, please God. We have grounds for predicting that this year we will approach nearer our goal—a Catholic Theatre Arts Quarterly. The barrenness of the Conference's coffers has accounted for our recent temporary suspension of publication. The

low estate of the exchequer, in turn, is the result of an alarming and discouraging total of dues delinquencies. It has been a misfortune, so far, to be forced into financing CATHOLIC THEATRE largely from the dues of the Conference members. As was stressed at the convention in Washington last June, this has been far from the best method of publishing the magazine. We promised then that steps would be taken to place CATHOLIC THEATRE on a self-liquidating basis, partially at least, so that dues from members could be released for the task of providing other important services of the Conference.

We are happy to feel that an arrangement we have been developing is about to flower. If the plan is successful, CATHOLIC THEATRE will be established on a sounder basis. Thus our Conference treasury will become more available for the promotion of other projects so far held in abeyance. According to present indications, CATHOLIC THEATRE will be published quarterly this year and improved in many ways.

However, this prospect does not alter the fact that a large group of our members have not renewed their membership for the current year. While CATHOLIC

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THEATRE may be fortunate in emerging a bit into the carefree light of security, your Secretary-Treasurer still depends upon the Conference members for the wherewithal to provide the services of the Conference. Those of you, who, for some reason or another, are today delinquent, remember that in thus retarding the functions of the Conference you are denying to members

in good standing the rights and privileges that are theirs in consideration of their annual dues, which they have remitted promptly. Please help us remove all traces of the poor prodigal by substituting the ripe golden ears of United States currency for the husks upon which the Conference has been living for some time past.

CONVENTION COMMENTARY

THE delegates who attended the Conference's second biennial convention last June have long since returned to their native heaths and reported the sessions to their respective organizations. Elsewhere in these pages, the Editor presents a brief summary of his impressions of the convention and an evaluation of its more general aspects. Thus there seems little left to say about the highly successful gathering in the Capital City last June.

But it may not be amiss at this stage of the new theatrical season to stress a point or two of practical value raised at the Washington convention. First of all, the reports concerning the two Play Cycles—in New York and Chicago—last year, indicated without a trace of doubt that this device, if employed properly and widely enough, can be an invaluable instrument for unifying more closely the various members of the Conference one with another, at least regionally. The New York and Chicago cycles were artistically successful, as the reports show, and with the experience gained in sponsoring them future cycles in those places should produce satisfactory results in every way—financially, technically, and popularly. It is the wish of our new President, Father Dinneen, that many more regions of the Conference sponsor Play Cycles this year.

Secondly, we were made to feel by speakers, Committee Chairmen and delegates at the convention that the next two years should represent for the Conference a period of external as well as internal development and progress, because, it was pointed out, rightly enough, that the 24 months preceding the second biennial convention were consumed in the rigorous and uphill task of founding our organization on a practical working basis upon which activities for future service might be

built. Theoretically, this viewpoint is irrefutable. Practically, it falls short of the facts. It is true, organization has proceeded. Many strides have been taken. But the two years of labor at Conference headquarters and in the field have failed to place the Conference in the position it should have occupied at convention time—a full-fledged service confederation ready and able to undertake all the projects proper to its field and to its purposes. We do not wish to inject any note of discouragement in these assertions, but merely seek to stress realistically the Conference's status at this writing. If we are behind schedule, perhaps our more factual sides tell us that perhaps we hitched not only our wagon but our immediate expectations to a lofty star. If we are not quite ready to provide for our members all they seek in joining our ranks, perhaps we should examine our aims and purposes. We might discover that our objectives lie beyond a welter of obstacles and impediments, which can be overcome but only with the salutary assistance of time.

Be all this as it may, this much cannot be gainsaid: the Conference will progress in proportion to its membership—and has progressed the past two years and a quarter in just that ratio. Measuring accomplishments to date in the light of our membership roster, we can confidently predict that with a steady and rapid increase in those rolls the results of Conference work in the next two years will fulfill the schedule outlined at the convention. This key to our future in the next two years lies as much in the hands of our present members as prospective ones. For those already in the Conference lists can serve in recruiting associates and neighbor organizations into the Conference fold, with benefit to all concerned.

THE LABORATORY THEATRE

IT IS a proud boast of Catholic Theatre that it can strike off the shackles of Broadway and declare independence of the secular theatre. This sounds impressive when uttered amid the glowing enthusiasm of a

convention or in the flush of the lecture rostrum. Fundamentally, of course, the most sober of us can join in the boast. But only when we have distinguished as to

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SELL 'EM BLUE SKY!

By MARY E. CLANCY *

I AM told it is difficult to sell audiences Catholic plays. I'm inclined to think the reason lies partly in the approach.

I once had a very astute professor, who was as good at selling philanthropists the idea of making big donations to the university as he was at teaching sociology. He once told me: "Don't try to sell a sportsman a first rate sports program; he's sure he knows more about it than you do. Don't try to sell a business man a business proposition (even if you're positive it's good); he thinks he knows what he wants out of business. Sell him—well, sell him—blue sky!"

Likewise, if you try to sell Catholic Theatre to the average Catholic you will find, I wager, that he will reply—without even giving you a chance to prove your point—something like this: "Catholic plays are dull. I want entertainment in the theatre. We get Catholic doctrine from the pulpit. I'm not interested in the Catholic way of life in plays in addition to this."

I don't wish to be misunderstood. It isn't that Catholics openly reject you. It's just a common human failing to think that on familiar subjects we already know the last word. It's just that Catholics have been prejudiced against Catholic plays, because in the past they have witnessed a good deal of mediocre stuff.

You know the answer to their objections, of course. You, who are versed in Catholic Theatre, know that when we speak of a "Catholic play" we place equal emphasis on both words. It must be drama, meeting the criteria of good dramatic construction: it must depict true character, supply action, and sustain interest; it must reflect life. In addition, if it is to be Catholic, it must be imbued with Catholic philosophy; it must reflect the Catholic way of life. You know you would not encourage a poor play merely because one of the characters happens to be a priest or a nun or a Catholic layman. You, who are versed in Catholic Theatre, would not encourage a badly constructed play merely because the author has an atheist converted to Catholicism in the last act.

But you won't get an opportunity to tell all this to your audience. You have to show your wares. You have to get an audience into your auditorium and let it see for itself what a Catholic play can be. That will convince it more than any word from you.

But the problem is to get the audience there. As a solution I revert to my opening suggestion: don't try to sell a Catholic play because of audiences' preconceived notions about Catholic plays. Sell them blue sky!

Let me give you specific examples. I trust you will forgive my talking about my own group, since that is the organization about which I know most.

When the Catholic Theatre Guild of Pittsburgh began, it let it be known that it would be a Catholic Art Theatre, for the production of plays which, because of their distinct Catholic flavor, were not likely to be produced on the professional stage, which must cater to a limited section of the populace. After this general announcement the Guild began publicizing a specific play, with not too much emphasis on its Catholic aspects.

The Guild, in reality, sold an American premiere of a famous European play. Peman's, "A Saint In A Hurry" had not as yet been produced in this country. An American premiere is always a drawing card. News stories in the daily papers recounted that this play had had over a thousand performances in Madrid alone. It had been produced in other parts of the continent and had drawn crowds in England and Ireland. Our publicity writers did not lose sight of the fact that people were so moved by the production that they thronged the bookstores to buy copies of the play afterward, and that it went into eleven editions in a year.

That's akin to a "Gone With the Wind" record, and we didn't fail to note that fact for the newspaper public.

It happened that the leads were in the hands of two of Pittsburgh's favorite actors. That point was emphasized. Some persons will always go to see their favorites; to such the play itself is but a secondary drawing card. It further happened that three of the important supporting roles were assigned to our Negro actors, who are among the most talented members of our group. Obviously this had news value in our city's large Negro paper. The play itself made a plea against racial discrimination—another point of distinct news value for a Negro paper, and we were accorded a spread on it.

Whenever Pittsburgh's leading hair-stylist—who charges milady a dollar and a half just to "set" her hair—agreed—because of his interest—to arrange the sixteenth century coiffures for the women in "A Saint

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* Miss Clancy is a prominent member of the Catholic Theatre Guild of Pittsburgh.

Once Over Lightly

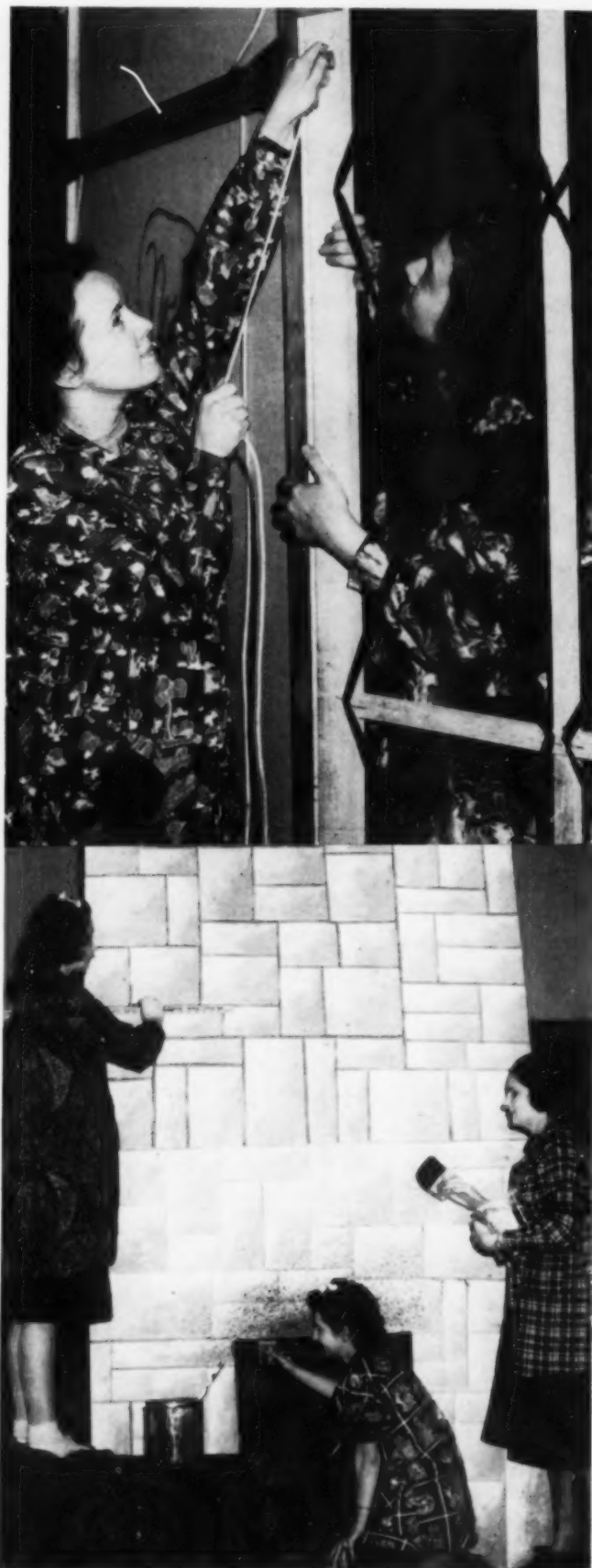
[Being an account of the doings in the field of experimental drama at Marywood College, Scranton, Pa., presented herewith through the courtesy of the *Marywood College Bay Leaf*. Special articles of this nature concerning the activities of other Conference members will appear in future issues of CATHOLIC THEATRE.]

THE play's the thing at Marywood! During the past year the initiation of an experimental theatre movement at the college has captured the hearts and ambitions of all those who have been nurturing a desire to express themselves through the medium of the stage. It began with the Players' production of Lennox Robinson's "The Far-off Hills." During a run of the play in New York, audiences were enchanted with the realistic portrayal of the Irish way of life, as interpreted by the Abbey Players. The Marywood Players attempted to awaken the same responses in their audiences. The story dealt with Marion Clancy, a dominating, vocation-minded person who tried to manage her father's house and her two younger sisters, greatly to everyone's distress. To the relief of her family, Marion finally decides to marry Pierce Haggerty, on the promise that, with him to help, she could "run the town." Comedy was supplied by Pat and Dick Clancy, as well as by Oliver O'Shaughnessy and Dick Delaney, whose intimacy with Pat, the girl's father, called down Marion's wrath on their good-humored heads. The love story between Pat and Susie Tynan provided a characteristic Irish touch of pathos and human interest. When the curtain fell the audience voiced its appreciation of the Clancys as a family and as people whom they were pleased to know.

The same month, the Players produced an original peace play, dealing with the advantages of peace between nations, which they presented before the annual meeting of the Catholic Peace Federation.

Christmas was approaching and the Players scanned the play collections for a suitable Christmas play. At last, after lengthy discussions and close examinations, Philip Barry's "The Joyous Season" was selected. The story dealt with the establishment of the Farley family on Boston's Beacon Hill after a rapid climb to the top. In their effort to arrive, the Farleys had changed from a family of laughing Irishmen to "almost true" Bostonians. The play opened on Christmas Eve; the members of the family were generally irritable due to the arrival of Christina, their sister, who had dared to be different and had left the strong fortress of the family to join a Missionary order. Terry, the darling

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Marywooders at Work Backstage

A CONVENTION RETROSPECT

By THE EDITOR

[CATHOLIC THEATRE is indebted to CATHOLIC ACTION, official organ of the National Catholic Welfare Conference, for permission to reprint the following article. The Editor of CATHOLIC THEATRE believes this evaluation of the second biennial convention of the Catholic Theatre Conference reflects his reactions of the sessions so faithfully that little more would be gained by a special treatment for CATHOLIC THEATRE.]

IT IS safe to say that five years ago "Catholic Theatre" was verbal gossamer, misty and tenuous. It was the caption of an unpainted picture; the mystical voice of an unphrased aspiration of American Catholic intellectuals. Today, the picture is a reality and the aspiration a fact.

With the second biennial national convention of the Catholic Theatre Conference, held at the Catholic University of America June 27 and 28, now part of the American Catholic record, it seems equally safe to affirm that "Catholic Theatre" now represents a vital reality, a factor appearing ever more sharply in the milieu of Catholic Action. There is increasing concurrence in the opinion expressed at the Washington meeting by Archbishop Beckman, honorary head of the movement, that over and beyond the formation of Catholic Theatre as an agency for developing our Catholic traditions, a strong and ideal movement will not only aid the American secular theatre, but actually save it from the moral and esthetic depravity which now threatens its ruin. If a definition is in order, it might be said that "Catholic Theatre," generically, is a movement among and by Catholic drama groups which seeks to teach, represent, and project the Catholic way of life and living through the medium of the stage, by unitedly adhering to the fundamental standards of Catholic philosophy, art and morality as applied to the theatre; and, specifically, an effort to establish a solid and enduring American Catholic dramatic literature, by the provision of this literature to the Catholic theatre groups of the nation for production, and by the integration of this tradition with the rich depository of Catholic faith and culture.

Catholic Theatre as a reality can be viewed in two ways: first, as a movement, or as an organization—the Catholic Theatre Conference; secondly, as the realization of the movement's objectives. In short, as an attempt and as the successful termination of the attempt. It is the first conception with which we must be concerned here, simply because Catholic Theatre as a tradition, an institution, is still a goal to be achieved.

That the movement itself is here, and to stay, was convincingly proven, by and at the convention of the

Conference. The sessions wrote plainly across the pages of Catholic annals the fact that the dream of a few Catholic drama leaders at Chicago in 1937, when the Conference was founded, has received a local habitation as well as a name and stands forth a healthy, growing federation of Catholic drama organizations bound together by the common aims and purposes of Catholicism.

The convention disclosed what has taken place in these past two years to make the dream come partially true: a notable increase in the number of Catholic groups in the movement; the publication of recommended play lists as a step preliminary to the erection of a Catholic play repertoire; the publication of a theatre arts magazine as the mouthpiece of Catholic Theatre; the conduct of two "play cycles," those devices designed to coordinate Catholic stage activity in a regional way so as to exploit vigorously Catholic drama by Catholic dramatists; and, over all, the keen and active interest of at least two outstanding members of the Hierarchy—the Most Rev. Francis J. L. Beckman, Archbishop of Dubuque, who graciously accepted the honorary presidency of the Conference, and the Most Rev. Eugene J. McGuinness, Bishop of Raleigh, who took part in the convention sessions.

Small beginnings these, but foreshadowings of great things to come, under the honorary presidency of the Archbishop and the active presidency of the Rev. F. G. Dinneen, S.J., of Chicago. A preview of these future projects was made available in the plans outlined at the convention for the expansion of Catholic Theatre. Envisioned were the following: a library of new American Catholic plays; play cycles, drawing from this repertoire, held annually in all of the more than a score of regions of the Conference; expansion of CATHOLIC THEATRE, the Conference's official organ, into a Catholic Theatre Arts Quarterly; a lecture bureau; a complete guide to play material as to character, quality and availability; efforts to bring about a reduction of royalties in published plays for the benefit of weak drama groups.

At this juncture, it can be added significantly that one of the most important actions of the convention was the

decision to affiliate with the Department of Lay Organizations of the National Catholic Welfare Conference. Further measuring the status of Catholic Theatre, the convention emphasized that Catholic Theatre is already a physically developed element in Catholic life. There are thousands of Catholic stage organizations throughout the country, with their own theatres and equipment; thousands of expert directors and technicians; gifted actors and actresses; and a host of enthusiastic, talented youths receiving splendid theatrical training in the drama schools of our large universities. These are the tangible assets of Catholic Theatre already in our hands. What remains is to vivify and impregnate this potential agency of Catholic Action with the breath and being of Catholicism, with the common vital principle of the Catholic spirit.

Like Catholic Action, Catholic Theatre, essentially, is not new. It is a particular application of ancient and eternal Catholic principles to the world of the stage. The close kinship between the drama and the Church had its origin in the life of Christ Himself. The Rev. Daniel A. Lord, S.J., preaching a trenchant sermon at the convention Mass, made this point most eloquently when he termed Our Lord "the Great Dramatist," Who, "from the opening chorus of the angels on the hillsides of Bethlehem to the Consummation on the Cross of Calvary," lived dramatically and made the New Testament an "actor's paradise."

Father Lord referred to the German movement called "Strength through Joy," and declared that "we Catholics and we Catholic Theatre lovers can say 'Truth through Gaiety,' 'Truth through Beauty.'" "These are two things," he said, "that are as important to the heart of man as bread. God is more often betrayed by His enemies in the use of these things than in the need for bread. He is betrayed more often on the stages of nations than in the Council Chambers and Parliaments of the world. He is betrayed in this way because these things are so often used to drag the souls of men from the true gaiety of the spirit to the false gaiety of the flesh. God meant His children to be gay. He meant our voices to be lifted up in song, our heads to be full of laughter. He has given us the beauty and grandeur of nature to show us that beauty is part of our inheritance. "So we assemble for a high and noble purpose, convinced that man cries for gaiety, whether he be jobless or not; because we feel that good things must not belong to God's foes; because we know the plays of Shakespeare and the music of Verdi have done more to tie the world together into a cultural whole than all the peace treaties of history; and because we further know

that where men laugh they are not oppressed and while they laugh they will not submit to the oppressor."

Then, too, His Excellency, Archbishop Beckman, giving a most clear hint as to how, as its honorary leader, he will view Catholic Theatre, said at the convention banquet that because of the very dramatic beginnings of Catholicism itself there can be few who would question "the mature acquaintance with and proper place of the Church in the field of the drama."

A further insight into the Archbishop's conception of Catholic Theatre's role in the work of salvation is provided by his notable address. Over and beyond the formation of Catholic Theatre as an agency for developing our own Catholic dramatic tradition, His Excellency foresees a strong and ideal Catholic theatre not only aiding the American secular theatre but actually saving it from ruination on the petard of its own moral and esthetic depravity.

From earliest times, the Archbishop stressed, the Church has waged constant battle "for the maintenance of theatrical integrity," and today, he added, the stage bears "the same materialistic pockmarks which disfigured and ultimately ruined the theatrical face of the Roman Empire."

"We note also," he said, "that it is sick with the progressive anemia of commercialism, its unlimited possibilities for great beauty and exaltation, for spiritual refinement, corrupted to the core; its mission is the exaltation of vulgarity; its backbone has long ago metamorphosed into a sickening jelly; its arteries are hard with the hardness of clinking 'box-office'; sentimentality and surface noise are its bravest exponents; the microscopic examination of moral weaknesses its cardinal function."

The overtones in these statements of the Archbishop are quite audible: Since the theatre is an expression of the human soul it will live; and since it cannot live under the incubus of the conditions cited by the Archbishop it will survive because of the influence of an "Ideal Catholic Theatre," which, His Excellency said, must be "unmistakably Catholic," be organized with unity, purpose and determination, and do plays that are definitely Catholic and artistic.

No better way of closing this evaluation of Catholic Theatre is conceived than by taking, with its archbishop-president, the long view of its future. For it is indeed a very beautiful vista which meets our eyes in doing so.

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CATHOLIC EDUCATION AND THE DRAMA

By REV. BRENDAN LARNEN, O. P.*

WITHIN a week last summer two national conventions were held in the United States, sponsored by Catholic organizations and concerned with the drama. The first, at Rochester, New York, was the second annual convention of the Blackfriars' Guild, an organization of producing units concerned with the adult theatre. The other, held at the Catholic University of America, was sponsored by the CATHOLIC THEATRE CONFERENCE. The latter was the second biennial convention of the Conference and was more extensive in aim and scope. The CATHOLIC THEATRE CONFERENCE is functioning primarily to unite and aid all types of Catholic Theatre activity, from the Children's Theatre to the Adult Theatre. Unlike other conventions concerning the theatre which have been held the past few years, both these conventions were not only hopeful but assured of fulfilling their respective objectives. Since neither group is concerned with any commercial aspects of the theatre, they could foresee fearlessly that their basic task would be the enrichment of dramatic literature, the use of all theatrical media as a device to interpret life motivated by spiritual values, and thus share with the world some of the immortal beauty which is to be found only in a spiritualized human existence.

But such planned and progressive activity is not a new Catholic adventure in the realm of artistic creation. Catholicism has always fostered artistic achievement. In no small way Catholic education, in particular, has assumed such a role. In the monasteries of the past great literature was written, magnificent sculpture and delicate painting wrought. Soul-arresting music was composed during the cloistered life of many a religious. The drama, however, became not only a socialized art in the history of Catholicism but for many centuries one of the greatest media of Catholic education for the masses. Unlike the products of other fine arts, the drama was the people's property. Moreover, it was often the only means of Catholic education.

An evaluation of Catholic education and the drama necessarily requires an understanding of both. Catholic education, like Catholicism itself does not change essentially. But the activity, the expanse, and the influence of Catholic education, of course, increases and decreases according to circumstances of time and place.

The late and lamented Holy Father, Pope Pius XI, said in his Encyclical on "Christian Education":

Since education consists essentially in preparing man for what he must do here below, in order to attain the sublime end for which he was created, it is clear that there can be no true education which is not wholly directed to man's last end, and that, in the present order of

- Providence, since God has revealed Himself to us in the Person of His Only Begotten Son, Who alone is 'the Way, the Truth, and the Life,' there can be no ideally perfect education which is not Christian education.

He was saying nothing more than what could have been said by any of his predecessors, and would have been said by them had occasion demanded. Catholic education, then, need not necessarily be academic; Catholic education antedates academic endeavor in the Church, but Catholic education must be such that, as we find in "Catholicism In Education," by De Hovre-Jordan,

... it takes into account the intimate relation that really exists between the natural and the spiritual, between God and man, between the soul and body. It sees also the relation between the individual and society, the Nation, the Church, and the State. It takes into consideration other relations, too, such as the relation of individuality to personality, of the intellect to the will, of reason to feeling. And last but not least it sees the real relation between God and the world.

The primary function of Catholic education appears by definition to lead man to God. Although the same function may not be the apparent purpose of drama, yet it can be such. In fact, due to Catholic education, it has been at times throughout the history of the Church. There is a relation between Catholic education and drama which has been maintained and can be maintained. To determine whether this relation between Catholic education and the drama has been maintained, can be maintained, and should be maintained it is obviously necessary that some sort of a definition of drama be considered. Perhaps drama can be better described than defined. For that reason, then, the eloquent description of drama by Brunetiere is pertinent:

Drama is the representation of the will of man in contrast to the mysterious powers or natural forces which limit and belittle us; it is one of us thrown living upon the stage, there to struggle against fatality, against social law, against one of his fellow mortals, against himself, if need be against the emotions, the interest, the prejudices, the folly, the malevolence of those around him.

The history of Catholic education and the drama divides itself into four periods: the pre-medieval, the medieval, the post-medieval, and the contemporary pe-

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A Message From The President

THE ideals and inspirations of the Catholic Theatre Conference were magnificently set forth at the very outset and at the closing banquet of the Second Biennial Convention held at the Catholic University, June 27 and 28. At the Solemn Mass, Father Lord with exquisite skill portrayed in his sermon the sublime drama of the Gospel story from the Annunciation to Calvary. Finally, the whole proceedings reached a splendid and most impressive climax with the address of His Excellency, the Most Rev. Francis J. L. Beckman, Archbishop of Dubuque, at the close of the banquet, in which he showed the Church's patronage and use of the drama through the ages and its practical application to present-day conditions. Between these two high sounding notes all the proceedings were earnest efforts toward a practical application of those noble ideals. It is hoped that this present issue of CATHOLIC THEATRE may be able to convey fairly adequate impressions of the meeting to those who did not have the good fortune to attend.

Through the Conference's official publication the Executive Board and the editor are endeavoring to bring home to all little theatre groups and dramatic clubs in institutions and parishes the cultural possibilities of the Catholic Theatre Conference. From our Catholic colleges and universities hundreds of talented young men and women are coming forth eager to find opportunities to carry on the development of their dramatic talents and activities. It is a form of Catholic activity that is elevating, instructive and entertaining. Where will they find the opportunity and basis of operation? In our large parishes and Catholic organizations.

By their presence at the convention Archbishop Beckman and Bishop Eugene J. McGuinness, of Raleigh, North Carolina, gave evidence that the members of the American Hierarchy are interested and willing to give patronage and support to the Catholic Theatre Conference. From personal experience as a pastor with the Loyola Community Theatre as a parish organization, I can say most emphatically that there is hardly any other form of parish activity with finer cultural, educational and social values than a little theatre group with its board of directors, dramatic director, casts of players, business manager, stage manager, technicians, production staff and patrons proud of the performances. It has results far beyond any financial remuneration. The pastor need only give encouragement and they will do the rest.

The convention last June made it evident that the Play Cycle idea is a development of the Conference. The reports from New York and Chicago were most encouraging. A dozen such cycles can do more for the development of the Catholic Theatre than other plans. There is so much mutual inspiration in such contacts. The Executive Board of the Conference is ready and anxious to do all in its power to make the Catholic Theatre Conference a help and an inspiration to all groups and individuals interested in the theatre.

riod. Each of these has been definitely influenced by Catholic education as far as the drama is concerned. Without Catholic education it is difficult to conjecture what the history of the drama might have been. With the influence of Catholic education the drama undertook great promises to be fulfilled and were not fulfilled because the drama cut itself aloof from that directive influence when it was about to come of age.

The pre-medieval period of Catholic education and the drama was not at all assuring. While Catholicism was not only surviving but even thriving within the catacombs, the Roman theatre had become so licentious it was no longer decent to produce drama. Instead it was concerned with circuses and the martyrdom of Christians. The decent citizenry of the Roman Empire were not only wary of but abhorred both theatricals and actors. Because of the low repute of such, Emperor Constantine decreed the abolition of the theatre after he had made Christianity the state religion. The Church, however, was not inimical to the theatre or to drama, as such, but it was definitely opposed to the evils and vices which had become associated with them.

The history of the drama, as it were, repeated itself in

the Christian era when drama was born anew under religious auspices as had been the case of the Greek theatre. A German Abbess, Roswitha by name, wrote perhaps the first dramas of the Christian era. The content of her plays were concerned with the lives of the saints; they were modeled, however, after the manner of the comedies of Terence and Plautus, the two greatest Roman dramatists. Meanwhile, the liturgy of the Church made thought and action articulate in dramatic form. This drama passed beyond the portals of the Church to the plaza before the Church. Gradually it became more widespread and was under the production management of the various Guilds throughout Europe. The dramas of this pre-medieval period were sermons which would otherwise have been dull had they not been enlivened by the antics of the Devil and his associate, Vice.

Then came the medieval period, giving the drama more character; its content became more profound and its purpose more definite. Certain groups arose in various European countries which undertook to produce drama, motivated by Catholic education, and expressing Catholic attitudes towards various human problems. Drama

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CHIARA*—A Play

By PATRICIA O'NEIL, Providence, R. I.

(In publishing Miss O'Neil's one-act play, "Chiara," we are continuing our policy of affording readers of CATHOLIC THEATRE an opportunity to examine new plays, which, in our humble opinion, are distinctive and replete with great promise. Our interest is to exploit, insofar as possible, works by Catholic authors that, in our judgment, are outstanding and deserve the attention of Catholic drama groups seeking new and meritorious Catholic scripts. This play cannot be produced except with the permission of the author. Requests for production privileges and for royalty rates may be made through the headquarters of the Catholic Theatre Conference.)

[The scene is laid in a castle tower about the year 1245. Only half of the circular room is represented on the stage. The walls are of stone. There are a number of narrow openings in the rear for windows. The room is comfortably, almost luxuriously appointed in the clumsy furniture of the period. A big soft-looking bed stands in the middle of the rear wall. To the right of it, a table, before which stands an x-chair. To the left, a bench or small settle. The walls are hung with arras, and the floor, strewn with rushes. A good fire is blazing in the fireplace at the left. Steps are heard on the stairs outside the heavy iron-bound door, upstage right. A man's voice is heard, and then a woman's laugh trills prettily above it. The door swings open. Chiara and Rainoldo enter, laughing and panting as though after a hard climb. He is about twenty-five and dressed in the height of the prevailing fashion. His manner is that of the self-confident, arrogant sophisticate. She is about the same age, and expensively overdressed. Darkly beautiful, with a worldly-wise expression, she has the air of one who is trying not to be sorry that she is wicked.]

RAINOLDO [with a sweep of his hand]. Behold the cave in the desert where the stubborn saint will do penance for his sins!

CHIARA [still laughing]. Beset by unholy visions of wealth and power and soft-skinned maids.

RAINOLDO. He may welcome a bit of temptation before I have finished with him. It will be very dull here, you know, with nothing to do but read the Bible. A few visions will help him store up merit as well as furnish entertainment.

CHIARA. I am rather curious to see what this brother of yours is like. And if a cat may look at a king, a . . . [she pauses, searching for a word].

RAINOLDO. An experienced woman?

CHIARA. Thank you. An experienced woman may look at a saint, may she not?

RAINOLDO. Most certainly—if she would care to.

CHIARA. She may surprise you. When do you expect them?

RAINOLDO. Any moment. If all went as I planned, my men have already ambuscaded his party on the Aquapendente Road. They ought to be here shortly.

CHIARA. So they were hustling him off to Paris for ordination?

RAINOLDO. Yes; they didn't want to take a chance of losing him. Aquinos don't grow on bushes.

CHIARA. Which is perhaps just as well.

RAINOLDO [lightly]. And where would you be if it were not for an Aquino?

CHIARA [musing]. I wonder. [Abruptly, brightening]. How did you happen to know they were planning to leave Rome?

RAINOLDO. Happen is hardly the word, my dear. I am another Argus, with an eye on every principal city in Europe. One doesn't happen even to exist these days.

CHIARA. My lord, your genius for statecraft overwhelms me. RAINOLDO. Which is nothing, my dear, compared to what your genius for being beautiful does to me.

[He makes an attempt to take her in his arms, but she eludes him gracefully, laughing. She nods toward the window without looking at it.]

CHIARA. Isn't the view lovely from here?

[Rainoldo follows her as she continues to elude him with a maddening smile.]

RAINOLDO. The view be damned! Do you think I came up here to watch cows eat grass?

CHIARA. Why, Rainoldo! In the presence of a lady.

RAINOLDO. Chiara, what's wrong with you?

CHIARA [with a show of pretended ignorance]. Wrong? Why,

I don't know what you mean. Does anything seem to be wrong? RAINOLDO [coldly]. Reflect a bit, my dear. Do you think I brought you all the way from Florence, and at great expense, to act cold and strange like this? You have not been yourself for a whole week now. Why do you think I extended the hospitality of my home to you? Who else is there? [Tensely.] Chiara, who is it?

CHIARA [laughing nervously and throwing up her hands as though the idea were preposterous]. Why, haven't you guessed? It's your brother; what did you say his name was—Thomas?

[They both laugh as though it were a capital joke, but Chiara's laugh is nervous and forced, and she keeps it up rather longer than is necessary].

RAINOLDO [relieved]. Oh, so it's Thomas, is it? You'd find him very stimulating, I'm sure. His taste runs to hair shirts and scourges, you know.

CHIARA [pretending amusement]. Indeed!

RAINOLDO. Goes about the streets begging, he does—the Count of Aquino's son!

CHIARA. Very poor taste.

RAINOLDO. And to think he could have been abbot of Monte Casino! It was just the thing for him as long as he was going to insist on this religious nonsense. There was all that revenue from the monastery lands just waiting to be dumped into our laps, and we could have had a finger—yes, a fist—in the Pope's political pie. We all tried to talk him into it, but the fool wouldn't listen.

CHIARA. Selfish of him, wasn't it?

RAINOLDO. And to make matters worse, the inconsiderate ass ran off and joined this order hardly older than he is—Dominicans they call themselves. Why, of course, they would be delighted to have an Aquino do their begging for them!

CHIARA [lightly]. You must be avenged, Rainoldo!

RAINOLDO. Yes.

CHIARA. The honor of the House of Aquino must be upheld.

RAINOLDO. Thomas, incredible as it may seem, has a perfect horror of luxury. To him, sleeping on straw is wallowing in a sensuous sty. But I'm not going to give him a chance to play the starved ascetic. I intend to corrupt his stoic resistance to the pleasures of the flesh. And to that end, I have made this a very Babylon of iniquity—rushes on the floor, fine furnishings, a soft bed, plenty of fuel. And he will have the richest food and wines I can find.

CHIARA. You're wonderful, Rainoldo. You've thought of everything—everything but the most important thing.

RAINOLDO. And what might that be?

CHIARA. Woman, my dear; surely you've heard of woman—the hand that rocks the cradle, the oil on the troubled waters of life?

RAINOLDO [brushing the idea aside]. No; I have thought of that, too. But it isn't even worth trying. Thomas regards women as just another kind of man.

CHIARA [with an incredulous smile]. Really now, Rainoldo . . .

RAINOLDO. It is very apparent you do not know my brother.

CHIARA. I do not have to; these monks are all alike.

RAINOLDO. Ah, no; not Thomas. I only wish he were as sensible as the average shave-pate. Why, if he had an idea a woman had stepped foot in this place, he wouldn't enter it until he had sprinkled it with holy water and Latin abracadabras.

CHIARA [with a laugh]. Rainoldo, even if you are not exaggerating, I still insist that the right woman could do wonders for your brother.

RAINOLDO. And I still insist that there is no right woman.

CHIARA [enigmatically]. Are you sure?

RAINOLDO. What do you mean, Chiara?

* In obedience to the decree of Pope Urban VIII, this play does not in any way attempt to discredit the legend concerning the incident in the life of St. Thomas, which has served as source material for the drama.

CHIARA. What do you think I mean?

RAINOLDO. Surely you are not suggesting that you . . . ?

CHIARA. And why not? I feel in need of a little amatory exercise, after having been faithful to you so long.

RAINOLDO. No; absolutely not! You belong to me.

CHIARA [*listlessly*]. Yes, I know you owe me. But since you do, you have no reason to be jealous of a monk?

RAINOLDO. What makes you think that I am. Thomas is no one to be jealous of. Why, he isn't capable of doing you justice. He thinks women are merely people with souls to be saved.

CHIARA [*pensively, staring before her*]. Souls to be saved! It must be fine for one whose soul is still his own. Unfortunately . . . [*She smiles and shrugs.*]

RAINOLDO [*surprised*]. Chiara!

CHIARA [*dully, still staring*]. What?

RAINOLDO. You are strange today—strange; not at all like yourself.

CHIARA [*with a twisted, mirthless little smile*]. I think you are old enough to know the truth, Rainoldo. I have a soul just like everyone else. You never suspected it, did you?

[*He breaks out into a loud, maddening laugh.*]

CHIARA [*spiritually, with the same smile*]. It amuses you, doesn't it?

RAINOLDO. Well, I must admit I hadn't thought . . .

CHIARA [*wearily*]. No; I know you hadn't thought. You were too much in the habit of regarding me merely as a body.

[*He reaches out and draws her to him, mumbling almost incoherently.*]

RAINOLDO. But never other than as a divinely beautiful, extremely desirable body, robbing me of reason and leaving me quite mad.

[*He has her in his arms, and tries to kiss her, but she struggles free.*]

CHIARA [*angrily*]. Can't you leave me alone, Rainoldo? You are always at me like a dog with a package of chops.

RAINOLDO [*nonchalantly*]. Why, Chiara! You do me an injustice.

CHIARA. By speaking the truth?

RAINOLDO. But you might have put it a little more delicately, you know. Truth is a very malleable substance.

CHIARA. I don't want to put it delicately. I want you to know . . .

RAINOLDO [*breaking in*]. That you are tired of me; that you prefer to waste your time on a miserable monk. Is that it?

CHIARA. You do not understand how a pure man can have any attraction for a woman, do you?

RAINOLDO. Hardly; not for your kind of woman, at least.

CHIARA. My kind of woman, I suppose, is only good enough for men like you.

RAINOLDO. It might be more exact to say that a man like me, knowing the way of the world, is less apt to experience—ah-h-h—contamination, than another less calloused.

CHIARA [*musings*]. Calloused . . . He is like a field of dazzling, blue-white snow before anyone has walked in it.

[*He breaks out into a raucous laugh.*]

CHIARA [*cruelly jolted*]. What do you find so amusing?

RAINOLDO. I was thinking of the mud on your feet!

[*There is a tense silence, during which Chiara struggles for words.*]

CHIARA [*through tight lips, her eyes blazing*]. Laugh! Laugh at me! I enjoy it; love it! God, how I hate you. Hate you for your smug conceit. Hate you for the way you look at me as though you were judging a horse. You are surprised! You cannot understand! You never thought! Of course you never thought—of me. It was yourself you were thinking of.

RAINOLDO [*white with rage*]. You ungrateful little slut!

CHIARA Ungrateful? [*Laughs.*] Because I didn't give you a chance to tire of me first? You don't like it, do you. Doesn't it pinch your ego to know that just being one of your possessions wasn't enough for me? Am I ungrateful because I got tired of being shown off to your friends along with the horses and dogs and paintings? "This is from Tunis; that's from Spain; and, oh yes, I picked her up in Florence. Cheap, too." If there is mud on my feet, it is because I followed men like you through stinking swamps.

RAINOLDO. The trouble with you is that you think you can sell your wares and not part with them.

CHIARA. How well you understand! Sell? I've had no thought

of selling. I wanted to give—myself—all of me. Isn't that what they call true charity—when you give because you love? [*With a hopeless little shrug.*] But somehow, I was never able to find anyone who would give me himself in exchange. They all thought they had to pay me. [*She shudders.*] God, how sick, how deathly sick I am of this wretched life.

RAINOLDO [*unpleasantly pleasant*]. I understand, my dear. It is your husband you are thinking of, isn't it? Naturally you are lonesome for him. Perhaps you might even like to go back to him.

CHIARA [*starting*]. My husband?

RAINOLDO. Yes, your husband. Have you forgotten so soon?

CHIARA [*frightened*]. I'll never go back to him—never!

RAINOLDO. Surely you don't expect me to open the door of the cage and say, "Fly, pretty bird?"

CHIARA [*sinking down on a chair, her voice breaking*]. Why must you play with me like this? Can't you let me go—now? [*There is a pause, during which Rainoldo fondles his chin and observes Chiara calculatingly.*]

RAINOLDO. Look here, Chiara, I'll make a bargain with you.

CHIARA. Yes?

RAINOLDO. If you can make a fool of Thomas the way you did of me, I'll give you your freedom without another word.

CHIARA [*afraid to be hopeful*]. Can you be serious?

RAINOLDO. Certainly I am. But—there's a price if you fail.

CHIARA. You are not very flattering. Do you really think there is a possibility of failure?

RAINOLDO. Thomas, I assure you, will be unique in your experience. Should you fail to bring about the desired result, it will convince me that his case is hopeless. Observe the compliment I am paying you—if you cannot change him, nothing can. I shall give up my efforts to make a normal, rational man of him, and set him free. But, by God, I'll make you pay for his freedom with your own. I shall return you, with thanks, to your fond husband. He must be distraught with anxiety by this time.

CHIARA. You say that as though you expect a reward. Do you think my husband will fall on your neck and weep with joy? It is rather a dangerous practice to borrow another man's wife without first obtaining his consent.

RAINOLDO. What did you say your husband's business is?

CHIARA. He is a wine merchant. What has that to do with it?

RAINOLDO. Just this: can you imagine an insignificant vendor of second-rate Chianti threatening an Aquino and his best customer? Why, I could ruin him as easily as I could squash a grape, and he knows it. [*Laughing.*] No, my dear, it is you upon whom he will vent his righteous wrath.

CHIARA [*thoroughly frightened*]. Rainoldo, you are a fiend!

[*The sound of voices and the clatter of hooves sounds in the courtyard. Rainoldo jumps to the window. Chiara does not raise her head.*]

RAINOLDO [*still looking out the window*]. They're here! And they've got Thomas with them. Look at him, tied to his mule, with his skirts trailing in the dust. I'll wager he put up a fight.

[*Turning from the window.*] Thomas is like a blind bull. He can't see a red rag unless you shake it under his nose. And then—well, you'll find out in a very few minutes. I shall have him brought up directly. When I think sufficient time has elapsed for matters to come to a head, I shall return. [*He starts to go out.*] We are about to put your fatal charm to the test. [*Pausing in the doorway.*] And I don't know which I want more—to see you succeed or fail.

[*He goes out. Chiara stands looking after him. She takes a step toward the door as though to stop him, then changes her mind, and stands thinking. Suddenly, as though having come to a decision, she raises her head, smiles, draws herself up and runs her hands down her sides. Steps are heard on the stairs, and the sound of voices. She looks quickly about her, and then steps into the shadows near the fireplace. The door opens and Thomas enters with two guards, who go out immediately. The key is heard turning in the lock. Thomas, who wears the full Dominican habit, including the white scapular, is a tall, heavily-built boy of not more than twenty, with the slow, pre-occupied manner of one who has exchanged the reality of this world for that of another. His plain, serious countenance radiates inward goodness. His whole expression is one of unrelenting sanctity. He pushes the cowl back, looks around him a moment, and then throwing himself down on his knees, buries his face in his hands. After a few moments, he raises his eyes to heaven.*]

THOMAS. Oh glorious Creator, if it be in accordance with the dictates of Thy most sweet will, I beseech Thee to set me free. For more than all things else I desire to be ordained priest. Give me my freedom, I beseech Thee, that I may serve Thee. O God, my God . . .

[The look of exaltation on his face changes to one of startled surprise as Chiara steps out of the shadows. He jumps to his feet and makes the sign of the cross.]

THOMAS. In nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus sancti. Depart from me, Satan, I command you.

CHIARA [advancing as he retreats before her]. Have you by any chance, mistaken me for someone else?

THOMAS. What do you want?

CHIARA. I have come to see if you are as holy as men say.

THOMAS. I am not in the habit of receiving women in my room.

CHIARA. And why not? Isn't hospitality a Christian virtue?

THOMAS. There is a time and a place for hospitality.

CHIARA. You mean you'd rather not be hospitable to a woman.

THOMAS. I didn't say that.

CHIARA. You don't have to. It is quite apparent that you are not used to women. I make you uncomfortable, don't I?

THOMAS. That is beside the point. You must go. Have you no regard for your reputation?

CHIARA [with a little laugh]. Haven't you guessed?

THOMAS. Guessed what?

CHIARA. My, but you're the innocent! Do you really believe me virtuous?

THOMAS [firmly]. Yes.

CHIARA. That's beautiful, Thomas. You want to believe that I am good, and so you refuse to let yourself think otherwise. You insist that I am, even when I shout that I am not. That is the way you monks reason about a lot of things I've heard.

THOMAS. If you have no regard for yourself, consider, at least, what people will think of me.

CHIARA. I am sure they will think it quite all right.

THOMAS. What!

CHIARA [with pretended ignorance]. Why, of course! What harm could possibly come to me in a saint's room?

THOMAS. I do not pretend to be a saint.

CHIARA. Splendid! Then you are not just a pious priest after all.

THOMAS. That isn't what I meant. Why do you always put the wrong interpretation on what I say?

CHIARA [contritely]. I'm sorry. What did you mean then—that you are a saint?

THOMAS. Certainly not!

[There is a silence, during which Chiara regards him with a smile.]

THOMAS. What are you staring at?

CHIARA. Your chin.

THOMAS. My chin?

CHIARA. I never thought that one so ascetic could be so [looking up at him from under her lashes] alarmingly virile and compelling. Do you know, Thomas, if you didn't have this peculiar notion you were a saint, you would be really charming.

THOMAS [snapping]. I have no desire to be.

CHIARA [sweetly]. Would you care to hear my confession, Father?

THOMAS [bitterly]. I am not yet a priest.

CHIARA. You do not need to be to hear this confession. The Pope himself could not absolve me from this sin. I am in love.

THOMAS. There is no sin in that.

CHIARA. I love you.

THOMAS [shocked]. God have mercy on you.

CHIARA. Can a woman be all bad if she loves a good man?

THOMAS. I don't know anything about such things.

CHIARA. I never loved a good man before. It might have made a difference if I had.

THOMAS. I should like to do something to help you.

CHIARA. You know you don't mean that. How could you help me? You cannot even help yourself.

THOMAS. What right have you to stand here questioning me like this?

[She stands with her hands on her hips, smilingly triumphantly at him. He backs away from her slowly toward the hearth, stoops, and snatching up a firebrand, pursues her to the door.]

THOMAS. Get out! Get out of this room. Go back to the

brothel where you belong, and may God have mercy on me for talking to you.

[She flees before him. At the door she struggles frantically with the latch as he towers over her, trembling with rage, the torch flaring and guttering above his head.]

THOMAS [pounding on the door]. Open! Open the door!

[There is no answer. They stand looking at each other, not knowing what to say or do. He is speechless with rage. She cowers before him. But suddenly, drawing herself up, she throws her head back and laughs derisively.]

CHIARA [triumphantly, breathlessly]. You are afraid, Thomas!

[Thomas starts back at the derision in her voice. He rushes to the window, looks out, sees no one, turns back.]

THOMAS [tensely, fearfully]. Get out!

CHIARA. Terribly, horribly afraid! If you could see how white and scared you look—how you tremble—like the last leaf on a tree. This is what those Dominicans have taught you—the sniveling hypocrites—to hate life, to fear it, to drive it from you with a torch. And all the time they indulge their appetites and grow fat laughing at you, the sniveling hypocrites. Poor boy, you have learned your lesson well.

THOMAS. Get out!

CHIARA. [with a vicious pleasure, almost chanting]. You are afraid, afraid, afraid. You are afraid of me! I have reduced you to your pitiful essentials. Stripped of your habit, you're nothing but a poor, frightened man, who doesn't trust himself. And that is a very dangerous compliment to pay a woman.

THOMAS. What makes you think I fear you?

CHIARA. Does a man ever defend himself against something he does not fear?

THOMAS. I am not defending myself; I want you to go.

CHIARA. And the torch, I suppose, is to light me down the stairs!

[Thomas looks guiltily at the brand as though seeing it for the first time. He drops it on the floor. It goes out.]

CHIARA. You wanted me to go very badly, didn't you? Oh,

Thomas, aren't you ashamed?

THOMAS. Ashamed? I've done nothing to be ashamed of.

CHIARA [penitently]. I know. [She pauses.] But you looked so frightened. Somehow, I never thought a holy man had to be afraid—that way. Do you understand what it is I am trying to say?

THOMAS [sinking into a chair, and staring dully at the charred stick]. [Musing.] Something nobler, manlier. . . .

CHIARA [eagerly]. Now do you see what I mean?

THOMAS [slowly, as though waking to a great reality]. I think I am beginning to. [There is a pause, then he raises his head suddenly, joyfully, as though a cloud had just lifted from his mind.] I am not afraid of you!

CHIARA [hopefully]. No?

THOMAS [after a thoughtful pause]. What is your name?

CHIARA [eagerly]. Chiara.

THOMAS. It is as though I were seeing you for the first time. I know now. All the beauty in you is of God. Why has it never occurred to me before? Why, it is blasphemous to deny beauty!

CHIARA [breathless, thinking it her moment of triumph]. Now it is I who fear you!

THOMAS [puzzled]. Fear me? But there is no need to.

CHIARA [pretending to shrink from him; looking up from under her lashes]. But I want to.

THOMAS [mystified]. You want to. . . ?

CHIARA. If you see God in me. . . .

THOMAS [after a moment's pause]. Do you know what you were trying to say a moment ago?

CHIARA. What?

THOMAS. That if I had known you could not harm me unless I wanted you to, I should not have feared you. Do you not see, Chiara? You were right when you called me a coward, but you did not know how right you were.

CHIARA. But I had no intention. . . .

THOMAS. I know you hadn't. Neither of us realized it then, but that is what you meant. You were as blind as I, yet you led me into the light. You brought me face to face with myself. I shall never be able to thank you enough for that.

CHIARA. You know why I came here.

THOMAS. Because you were lost.

CHIARA. Lost?

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Laboratory

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essentials. For example, we cannot be so provincial or reactionary as to ignore the material achievements of our age in general, and those of the secular theatre in particular. We cannot quarrel with, much less reject, the man or group who can give us visual or auricular beauty on a stage by an ingenious lighting device, a clever set, or a gifted, trained voice. As a matter of fact, we must be as wise as the children of this world in the things of the world. If to do so means following the lead of the secular theatre in physical matters, so be it. If that be slavery, we, as progressive, practical people of the theatre world, must be resigned if the most is made of it.

There is only one tyranny to which we will not submit: the dictatorship over the play. For there we are close to the essence of the theatre and to life. And since Broadway has abused its stewardship of the play, it becomes our duty to pluck the heart of the drama from despoiling hands and give back to it the liberty and beauty and truth it once enjoyed. In doing so, we must rebel against the tycoons of Broadway, and have so rebelled in the very organization of the CATHOLIC THEATRE CONFERENCE.

With these distinctions in mind, it makes it easier for us to suggest that one Broadway device of proven and inestimable worth is one that we can well transfer into our own hands to assist us in the upbuilding of the Catholic Play Repertory. And that is the practice of the tryout. In our enthusiasm for the discovery and development of new Catholic plays, we must not forget that, be these plays ever so Catholic and promising, they are new. And therein lurks the *bete noir* of Catholic Theatre. A new script is a dangerous thing, regardless of the potentialities and blandishments that beckon us on, siren-like, as we thumb the script in the depths of our easy chairs. Serenely beautiful and stirring a play may be in our libraries. On the stage, it may become a bull in a china shop so far as theatre is concerned. And, after all, theatre is the first test of any new dramatic opus.

Thus the importance of the Laboratory Theatre stands revealed. It is a matter of regret that so many of our otherwise progressive and alert dramatic organizations have lagged in the matter of providing new scripts that have excited their interest, a reasonable test on the stage in the presence of private, critical and select audiences before presentation to a public that pays through the nose at our box offices and therefore expects with good

reason that what it comes to see as drama shall be at least theatrically competent. Untried scripts hastily programmed so frequently prove dramatically disastrous that a predilection even on the part of drama groups themselves against new plays has crystallized alarmingly to the detriment of Catholic Theatre.

We strongly urge all our groups to aid the cause of Catholic Theatre by seeking, encouraging and doing new scripts. But at the same time we caution these same groups to be fair and practical and provide every means at their disposal to subject such scripts to the acid test of the preview and later to the ministrations of the author or play carpenter so as to improve the play in line with what has been learned from production experience. This, to our mind, is the most directly beneficial phase of the Laboratory, or Experimental Theatre. For a while it will make little difference whether we develop new art forms in experimental theatres or elsewhere. However, it is a matter of great moment for us to create an efficient dramatic literature that meets all standards of excellence in the theatre.

Convention

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"If we are limited in material resources, necessarily handicapped by the very youth of our movement," His Excellency said, "we are not in the least discouraged, for the joy of new creative effort carried on under the banner of the Almighty, the pure impulse to progress progressively toward that which we know to be good and legitimate is our recompense. Striving at first for a little that is best rather than for a great deal that is mediocre, working with the means at hand, we shall make up in spiritual strength what we lack in temporal properties. For we shall have the Holy Spirit Himself, the very Thought and Inspiration of the Catholic Church through 2,000 years, to help us in producing the new drama of the Catholic Theatre movement. Modeling our play upon vigorous Catholic Action rather than upon wishful materialistic thinking, we shall 'bring down the house of the universal theatre, become sponsors, so to speak, at the christening of a reborn art designed to influence profoundly the destinies of men in all ages. Then there will be no 'claquers,' as now, inciting the public to massed approval of wrong well performed; then, God grant, a good play well staged will be the rule rather than the exception."

SECRETARY'S CORNER

THE new Secretary is confronted with a number of problems, which, however are causing him no gray hairs, perhaps only for the reason that he is not inclined to be gray. One of such problems is the number of delinquent members. Many of our members have foresaken us because we seemed to have failed to measure up to their expectations. But so many delinquents do not realize that but a few of us are trying to carry on the work of a national organization. Few, too, are aware that our treasury is not ample enough to provide them with all the services they might expect. And very few realize they are foregoing an opportunity to be pioneers in the newest and no doubt the most engaging form of Catholic culture.

The new Secretary, however, is greatly indebted to those loyal members who have promptly renewed their membership and thereby aided the Conference in the publication of CATHOLIC THEATRE and in the maintenance of the service which it has continually afforded members.

The new Secretary would like to establish field agents for the Conference throughout the country. These could aid the Conference by soliciting membership and obtaining advertisements for each issue of CATHOLIC THEATRE. He is willing to welcome all such volunteers and guarantees to answer their applications immediately upon receipt.

The new Secretary would like also to have some person or persons who are interested in dramatic literature to keep abreast of current dramatic writing and inform him of the same that he may classify such information and make it available to the members.

The new Secretary would like to do many other things, but he is handicapped by time and ability. Consequently he calls upon those who read these lines to volunteer to aid him in any way which they can to further the aim and scope of the Conference.

The new Secretary would like to be a librarian, a technician, a critic, a producer, an agent; in fact, he would like to be anything at all that he could be to aid those interested in the Conference and in Catholic drama. But such, of course, is impossible. Perhaps some others who have the same interest as he, will assist him by assuming some of the many roles which he is called upon to undertake by reason of the correspondence which comes over his desk.

The new Secretary concludes by recalling that the Rev. Francis X. Talbot, S.J., the eminent Editor of AMERICA, once said the Conference was born with inspiration, baptized with perspiration (at the Washington Convention in August, 1937!), and he hopes he can add it will come of age through cooperation!

Education

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then became somewhat as Brunetiere described it. Intense and internal human struggles were created upon the stage. Among such groups were the famous Mastersingers of Germany and the Brotherhood of the Passion in France. Had not the Protestant revolt intervened, such groups might have developed an arresting drama. Even some of the groups which were once dedicated to the sacred purpose of making the drama a medium for teaching proper morality, degenerated themselves and suffered consequent suppression.

The post-medieval period brought forth a dramatist who wrote in the Catholic tradition, although he cannot perhaps be acknowledged as a traditional Catholic. However, the educative processes which influenced Shakespeare's writings, the various sources for the content of his plays were for the most part Catholic. He subscribed to a Catholic concept of ethics. As Professor Baker observes, "One of the chief elements in the genius of Shakespeare is his power . . . to discern in his material . . . eternal principles of conduct." During this period Jesuit schools presented playlets. Such may account for the fact that two of the greatest Spanish dramatists, Lope de Vega and Calderon, were alumni of Jesuit schools, as were Racine and Corneille whose dramas enriched the French Theatre.

Until the contemporary period Catholic education was in no position to further the drama, because of persecutions, heresies, and schisms. But now, and particularly in the United States, a new era of dramatic endeavor emerges. Ireland had produced such Catholic playwrights as T. C. Murray and Padraic Colum, France has Henri Gheon and Paul Claudel, while Spain possesses G. Martinez-Sierra and Jose Marie Peman. Catholic education has indirectly fostered their works, but Catholic education in the United States is definitely committed to furthering the development of drama. In 1937 the Catholic University of America invited the Blackfriars' Guild to conduct a school in dramatic arts. Hitherto the Blackfriars' Guild had been a producing

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UNDER THE MARQUEE

This column of news, notes and comments is for the information of our members and the other readers of this magazine. To facilitate the handling of such material we request that groups or individuals desiring to forward data for use in *Under the Marquee* send same to the CATHOLIC THEATRE CONFERENCE, Office of the Secretary, the Catholic University of America, Washington, D. C., labelled "Marquee." We are interested in the activities of all our members and prospective members and we will use, in so far as possible, all material relating to such activities if such is provided us.

This October issue of CATHOLIC THEATRE hasn't come a minute too soon . . . We were faced with the very serious necessity of begging, borrowing or stealing a new mail bag. The present one has been bulging unbecomingly with all sorts of things. Some of the bulges have been removed and now appear in this column . . . without protuberances, we hope . . . and a great deal of exuberance.

So with a deep breath we plunge into a new 'Marquee' fiesta . . . Fittingly, we find on the top of the heap another heap: the 1939-40 plans for things dramatic at the Catholic University . . . Between the School of Speech and Drama, the undergraduate players, the Harlequins, and the graduate students, we stand appalled at an ambitious schedule. To wit: Eliot's "Murder in the Cathedral"; a new musical show based on the career of George M. Cohan, by Walter Kerr; Emmet Lavery's special work on Father Damian, "Kamiano"; Moliere's "Miser"; Lemnox Robinson's "Far Off Hills"; and Sierra's "Kingdom of God" . . . This prospectus should more than satisfy those of us seeking All-Catholic programs and convince those who say it can't be done that we can try anyway.

Fordham University hasn't reported as yet, and probably won't until the varsity grid team has had its day, but our records indicate that since the last CATHOLIC THEATRE the Fordham Mimes and Mummies have been engaged in Experimental Theatre under the slogan, "A play every Tuesday" . . . This group is specializing in the one-act play . . . May we be pardoned in seeing the influence of the Rev. Robert I. Gammon, S. J., Fordham's brilliant President, in all this? . . . More later re Fordham . . . In the meanwhile, good luck on the gridiron . . . Brother and Sister Orchids for Mundelein Seminary . . . Since last writing, the dauntless philosophers at St. Mary-of-the-Lake gave us a world premiere of the prolific Mr. Lavery's "Brother Petroc's Return," adapted from the English novel by the anonymous nun, S.M.C. . . . The production was staged entirely by the seminarians and a special musical score was arranged to emphasize the liturgical backgrounds of the play . . . Incidentally, while not written for all-male casts, the play was easily adapted to this purpose . . . Look ye to it, those of who are desperately looking for all-male scripts . . . Mr. Lavery's observation in this connection is worth recording . . . He says "it is particularly encouraging that it should be a seminary which took the lead in this type of activity," adding that "it gives new force and meaning to the work of the Catholic Theatre Conference which is not only trying to coordinate existing personnel and equipment, but is also trying to increase the number of Catholic laboratory theatres in the country." . . . See editorial on Laboratory Theatre . . .

On the subject of new plays and laboratory, the world premiere which the Catholic Theatre Guild in Pittsburgh gave to a play with the intriguing title "The New Sin," shows the value of laboratory work . . . "The New Sin," based on the essay of the same name by Father Ronald Knox, was given a public production last Spring in Pittsburgh . . . Written by Joseph A. Breig, a young newspaperman, it seemed to be highly successful . . . and thought-provoking . . . But lo and behold, we now find Mr. Breig coming up with a new "New Sin" . . . We have the new script before us and what the author hasn't done to the old one is a "New Sin" . . . And all because first production showed him so much he didn't like about his brain child he completely revamped it . . . And still more wondrous . . . Washington Blackfriars are to do the new "New Sin" in Laboratory this January . . . A new departure, we might say, this try-out after public production. It seems to us, Mr. Breig and his fellow Pittsburghers, as also the Blackfriars, seem to have caught the point of this new play business . . . Didn't we say, or did we, that the Pittsburgh Guilders did "Kamiano" last season in empty-unph scenes . . . Mary Clancy mentions in her article

this current issue that the other drama groups in that great town went home with necks of rubber what with stretching their heads out to see how the Seventy and Seven scenes were managed . . . But the Guilders didn't mind the scouting . . . And there's a group which says, "If you ain't got a Catholic play you needn't come around" . . . Yes, and they're solvent, too.

Catholic scripts seem to be good enough for our brethren outside the fold . . . Witness Federal Theatre's production of "Within These Walls," in New Orleans last year . . . and the "Cradle Song" production of the Gilson Players at Kansas State Teachers' College . . . And more credit to both these groups for injecting authenticity into their productions by consulting Catholic sources for advice . . . The Trappists in New Orleans aided "Within These Walls," by request of the producers and the Gilson group in Kansas conferred with the Rev. Arthur Tonne, O.F.M., Chaplain of the Newman Club at Kansas State Teachers, for guidance on the rituals used in the play . . . So Catholic Theatre cannot afford to be careless in our own milieu when our non-Catholic friends are so meticulous . . . Up New England way last season Boston College did Mr. Lavery's Cardinal Newman piece, "Second Spring," with a flourish . . . and, we understand, with audiences that included anybody who is anybody in that town of somebodies . . . The press went the whole-hog for the play . . . You know that's Father Bonn's dramatic family . . . That means good theatre in every respect. . . . Perhaps the interest of the next item we turn over is musical, but CATHOLIC THEATRE is interested in everything Miss Cecilia Mary Young, of Chicago, does . . . That grand pioneer in CATHOLIC THEATRE has written the libretto for a distinctly Catholic opera, collaborating with Miss Josephine Rice, president of the Chicago Catholic Poetry Society, the composer . . . The title is "The Fate of the Flowers." Flowers of the gardens are impersonated as characters and the climax is reached when the flowers do homage to Christ the King . . . You will remember Miss Young compiled "The Review of Plays Suitable for Amateurs" a few years ago . . . Now the Movie Department will perk up its ears . . . You see, Loyola University in Los Angeles, according to information since the last CATHOLIC THEATRE, is somewhere in the midst of producing an original film drama to be called "Murder at the University" . . . Under the direction of Richard Walsh, of United Artists, the Del Ray Players, entirely composed of students, are making the 16 mm. celluloid. Good luck.

This is a hurried trip through the gamut of the dramatic field . . . so why not mention that Rochester Blackfriars dramatized chapters of a catechetical pamphlet over the radio to promote interest in the religious discussion club movement . . . The broadcasts were sponsored by the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine . . . By the way, that Rochester Chapter of the Guild is proudly waving a list of subscribers munificently totaling something like 1,500 . . . Don't copyright your methods, Father Randall . . . This pot pourri would not be complete without a foreign note. Here it is: It seems last August on the summit of the mountain overlooking Brive, France, hundreds of persons watched the presentation of a life of St. Anthony by the Petits Clercs of St. Anthony. The production, in the form of a mystery play, took place before the refuge there built by St. Anthony and having the distinction of being the point of departure for many of the Crusades.

. . . Belated congratulations are due Mrs. Josephine McGarry Callan, a member of the Conference's Board last year and an instructor at Catholic U's Drama School for the honorary Doctorate of Letters De Paul University in Chicago conferred upon her last June . . . Due congratulations are hereby paid . . . heartily, Mrs. Callan . . . More congratulations for Aquinas High School in LaCrosse, Wis., for again sponsoring their Catholic One-Act Play Tournament for academics and co-edu-

cational high schools . . . Good Catholic drama is the aim of these competitions . . . Loras Academy, of Dubuque, Ia., copped first prize with "Dust of the Road," Aquinas received second with "The Flame Leaps Up," and St. Joseph's, Bellevue, Ia., came in third with the "The Watcher's Play . . ." Keep up the good work, Aquinas . . . Remember Violet Talbot Clifton, who wrote the beautiful play, "Sanctity"? . . . Of course. Well, we learn that this lady, who also wrote the "Book of Talbot," for which she received the Tait Black prize, is donating a beautiful religious triptych to a priory church in England . . . Wallace Wood is the Chelsea executor of the triptych.

We must say something here in tribute to the labors of Mrs. Leo G. Bujarski, chairman of the Kansas-Nebraska-Colorado Region of the Conference . . . Mrs. Bujarski has made things hum in her territory and, among other things, she issues a periodical News Sheet for her region, teeming with reports of activity out there . . . If Mrs. Bujarski sets the pace, as she seems to be doing, the Conference will become a prairie fire in two years . . . We would like to reproduce her News Sheet here because of its plethora of interesting notes and happenings . . . Mrs. Bujarski says in a letter: "The enclosed News Sheet may give you something of a perspective of the Conference in this region." And what a perspective, Mrs. B . . . God bless you . . . Two Benedictine colleges—Mt. St. Scholastica and St. Benedict's of Atchison, Kansas, have solved the biggest problems of student dramatic production by the organization of the Twin College Players, intercollegiate club for students who have dramatic ability . . . The group, they tell us, not only serves to concentrate the best talent of the two colleges and to direct and develop that talent, but also creates an incentive for ambitious young actors to gain entry into the charmed circle. Its ultimate objective is the furtherance of Catholic Theatre . . . Their achievements are notable . . . including a "Mikado," "The Upper Room," played before thousands in the Municipal Auditorium in Kansas City during Passion Week; "Smilin' Through"; Sophocles' "Antigone," and "The Prince of Pilsen." Sister Benedicta Howe, O.S.B., of Mt. St. Scholastica, and the Rev. Maurus Kennedy, O.S.B., of St. Benedict's, are co-directors . . . Sister Benedicta is Chairman of the Catholic Theatre Conference's Leavenworth Chapter and Father Maurus is Vice-Chairman . . . Bravo and brava.

Way down south in Belize, British Honduras, the Catholic Youth Organization of the Cathedral did Gheon's "Old Wang" last August . . . Report: attractive and well staged production . . . Thanks, Mr. Lavery, for your kind words anent the last issue of CATHOLIC THEATRE . . . Thanks, too, for your own contributions to it . . . We pass along his comment on our editorial in the November, 1938 issue, "What Is a Catholic Play?" . . . "Don't you think," says Mr. L., "that the evolution of the best in Catholic plays will come by experimentation rather than by definition? I have the feeling that we might write the best definition in the world and have only a lot of poor plays to show for it" . . . We pass the question along to our members and readers for their answers or comments . . . Let us hear from you. The subject is fundamental.

Is Sister Avita, of St. Joseph's College, Emmitsburg, Md., still looking for an operetta? We promised at headquarters to solicit information for her in the next issue of CATHOLIC THEATRE . . . This is the next issue and we keep our promise by asking anyone who has ideas regarding good operettas for school use to communicate with Sister Avita . . . She wants a script for an all-female group suitable for presentation by a college choral club . . . A Catholic theme or story seems desirable.

. . . Rosary College in River Forest, Ill., under the able direction of Sister Mary Peter, O.P., tells us something of its dramatic menu for the coming, or should we say now, current season . . . Well, Lady Gregory's "Dragon" is the choice for November. Christmas season will probably see either Gheon's "Christmas on the Village Square" or a choral speaking program . . . And, good news . . . The College hopes to have a new play to introduce to Catholic Theatre in February . . . An *al fresco* production in May will round out the season . . . Then at intervals in the course of the year there will be one-act play bills, choral speaking groups and radio programs . . . Rosary is to be heartily thanked for giving one spot in its valuable program to a new play . . . We eagerly await announcement of its identity. Yes, Blackfriars' reports are trickling in . . . but returns from

some score of chapters have not as yet been received. Our knowledge to date discloses that Washington Blackfriars are beginning their season with Leo Brady's "Brother Orchid," seconding it with "Shadow and Substance," by . . . everybody knows who . . . doing an "Outward Bound" with a professional version of the play hitting the Capital this season, and climaxing the public program with Thornton Wilder's restless "Our Town" . . . But this is not all . . . Oh no . . . The Laboratory theatre is doing four new full-length scripts and a half dozen one-act plays of recent vintage in its new Little Theatre, while four more new and unproduced plays will be witnessed at the Guild's public Theatre Nights . . . Breathtaking, what? . . . Providence Blackfriars report Chesterton's "Magic" for the first production . . . They seemed to be cut off the air after that flash, however . . . Better luck next issue.

But the beloved Loyola Community Theatre of our new President, Father Dinneen, comes through with a full report . . . Listed for public production are Jacques Deval's comedy, "Tovarich," Philip Barry's "Spring Dance," that "Our Town" again . . . and Maxwell Anderson's "Elizabeth the Queen" . . . Distinguished lecturers will delight the hearts of Loyola subscribers . . . Among them will be the Rev. Bernard R. Hubbard, S.J., the "Glacier Priest," the Rt. Rev. Msgr. Fulton J. Sheen, and Dr. Albert de Quevado . . . Dr. Quevado will give a series of five lectures under the title, "The Art of Successful Living . . . Many thanks, Father Dinneen, for the printed copy of the report on your Play Cycle out there in Chi last year . . . Although read at the convention in June, we hope to publish it, together with the New York record, in the next issue of CATHOLIC THEATRE . . . We're finding little elbow room this time.

. . . Pittsburgh Catholic Theatre Guild has just informed us eleven scripts were entered in the Guild's playwriting Contest, which closed in August. Among them were five from England, one from Ireland, one from Scotland, and one from South India . . . The one from India arrived in long hand in a school boy's notebook; its author attached an apologetic note, stating he is a missionary priest . . . and no typewriter or bond paper was available . . . Hasn't someone an extra typewriter? It may bring great drama from an exotic dramatic land for Catholic Theatre in the U. S. . . . Judging has begun and we hope to announce the winners, come next issue . . . Many thanks, Bishop Boyle, for your interest in Catholic Theatre . . . Your appointment of the Rev. Victor I. Kennedy as official Moderator and Chaplain of Pittsburgh Guild tickled us here in Washington . . . How about this as a keynote for the ensuing quarter of a year: "At least one experimental production of a new Catholic play this season" . . . Until January . . . Au revoir.

THE MARQUIS.

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Blue Sky

(Continued from Page 5)

In *A Hurry* the editors of the Women's Pages were so interested they gave us an article on the research he was doing and published a picture of him standing with comb poised over the head of one of our costumed actresses.

Therefore, a goodly audience went to our auditorium to see an American premiere, to witness a very unusual play with a notable record, to watch their favorites, or to keep up with the Joneses—for if the city's most ritzy hair-stylist was interested enough to arrange the coiffures "that group must be class."

The audience witnessed all these things. But most important of all, they also witnessed a Catholic play.

Once they were inside the hall, we called attention to the fact that they were seeing Catholic Theatre with their own eyes by a program explanation of Catholic Theatre and by an entre-act speech. Afterwards we were told personally and by letter: "We didn't know Catholic plays were like this. Why, this is what Pittsburgh needs." "Why haven't Catholic groups concentrated on Catholic plays before?" "This is certainly a real field of Catholic Action, isn't it?" We agreed it was Catholic Action, and asked them to spread the word to their friends.

Meanwhile, we set about attracting others who hadn't seen our first offering. We looked for selling points for our second show, and decided on three points of emphasis. We sold newspapers and realists a play laid in a newspaper office and written by a newspaperman. They wouldn't be able to complain, as they do about so many newspaper movies, that it wasn't true to the life of the fourth estate. We sold Pittsburgh citizenry a play by a Pittsburgh author. Local pride is a good motive for patronage. We sold the public generally an attractive title—a title which started speculation and aroused curiosity. One of our members overheard two ladies discussing our street car ad in this wise:

"Can you read the rest of that sign about 'The New Sin?' I can't see that far."

"Yes, it's the name of a play the Catholic Theatre Guild is going to do."

"The New Sin! I wonder what it can be?"

"I can't imagine. Let's go and find out."

We presume they went, at least, many others did and we gave them a play laid in a newspaper office, written by a talented young Pittsburgh newspaperman, bearing

the provocative title, "The New Sin" and a play full of Catholic philosophy. Once again in our program we explained what Catholic Theatre can be. One non-Catholic said later: "That play certainly made me think. It made me sin-conscious again—for the first time since I was a child. I hadn't realized how far I'd been drifting from God." A priest wrote us: "That play shows graphically what we priests are trying to preach."

By the time we reached our third production—Mr. Lavery's "Kamiano"—our job was getting easier. Many people were already sold on Catholic plays. For those we hadn't reached we emphasized the fact that "Kamiano" was from the pen of Emmet Lavery. That's

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PLAY CONTEST ANNOUNCEMENT

For the benefit of those still interested in the National Playwriting Contest conducted by the CATHOLIC THEATRE CONFERENCE in the past year, we wish to announce that, because of several circumstances, the time limit for the contest has been extended until June 1, 1940. Full details of the contest are contained in the November, 1938, issue of CATHOLIC THEATRE.

Many scripts were entered in the contest before the close of the original contest period. The Judges examined these offerings carefully and agreed unanimously that because none of the entrants met fundamental dramatic standards they could not in conscience award any prizes.

The Judges stated that none of the authors wrote a play in the strict sense of the word. Most of them, they reported, merely placed the synopsis of the missionaries' martyrdom into dramatic form, but in doing so failed to achieve dramatic writing. Since vital, moving plays with good theatre and art are being sought in this contest as well as a memorialization of the heroic missionaries, the Judges felt unable to award prizes.

The Conference, however, is convinced that good scripts can be written and entered in this contest and has reopened the competition to afford another opportunity to our playwrights to submit contributions. Even those who have submitted manuscripts are free to contribute new work. Remember, write *plays*, not tableaux of the story we furnished you. Merely keep in mind the story of the martyrs as a basis, a theme, or occasion for your play. Let us make the contest a success this time.

Mr. Speaight Speaks

[Robert Speaight, prominent young English Catholic actor, director, lecturer and novelist, has become well-known to American theatre-goers in the course of a protracted sojourn in this country. While in the United States, he played in Orson Welles' production of "The Five Kings," lectured at Notre Dame University, and, last summer, as guest artist, played the leading role in Henri Gheon's "The Comedian," which the School of Speech and Drama at the Catholic University of America presented at the university and at the Sylvan Theatre, al fresco stage of the Nation's Capital. He also has played important roles in T. S. Eliot's "Murder in the Cathedral" and other notable successes. CATHOLIC THEATRE was fortunate in obtaining a generous and intimate interview with Mr. Speaight before he left for England and we herewith present his impressions of Catholic Theatre in the United States.]

QUESTION: Generally speaking, what was audience reaction to "Murder in the Cathedral"?

MR. SPEAIGHT: Audiences were, of course, very varied. Many persons insisted on thinking it was a detective story. A friend of a friend of mine, upon being urged to see the performance, asked: "Where does he (Mr. Speaight) play, the coroner?" There was an interesting incident in a manufacturing town of Yorkshire. In the scene where the four knights come forward to justify their killing of St. Thomas, a demonstration broke out in the gallery. There were shouts of: "You've gone and done it, you bloody murderers." The play provides continual contact with the audience, both in chorus and other characters who speak directly to spectators. Boston audiences were perhaps the best that the company played to. It is difficult to estimate what "moral" effect the play had, but it is a fact that many persons, of all faiths, were much moved and impressed by it.

QUESTION: Is there a place for religious drama in the professional theatre?

MR. SPEAIGHT: There is definitely a place for religious drama—although I am skeptical of its value in the professional theatre. In England it has come back in the churches, at such centers as the Canterbury Festival, for which "Murder" was written, and the Tewksbury Festival. It should emanate from the big religious centers, like the Cathedrals. Of course, plays like "The Comedian" would go in the professional theatre. Any-one would be glad to play in it.

QUESTION: I know you are a novelist. Have you anything to say to playwrights?

MR. SPEAIGHT: I have never dared to write a play. There are so few which I think are good. I think the playwright should be provided with a scaffolding against

which he can operate rather than write specifically Catholic plays. Eliot's new play, "The Family Reunion," is a Christian treatment of a classical play. It stresses the need of grace. This is the most helpful kind of religious play. Specifically, religious plays always of necessity have limited audiences. Plays should be written on common ground.

QUESTION: Is there any Catholic Theatre movement in England?

MR. SPEAIGHT: There are a few Catholic organizations, but with a very varying standard. Catholics, in England, are, of course, a small minority. The Catholic Stage Guild is an organization for members of the acting profession. English theatre is very far divorced from Catholic values. Most opportunity for religious drama is in cooperation with the Anglicans, at Canterbury or Tewksbury, at the festivals mentioned before.

QUESTION: Have you anything to say about your personal career?

MR. SPEAIGHT: I did quite a bit of playing with the dramatic group at Oxford University. After school, I was fortunate enough to get a job with a very good repertory theatre in Liverpool. That was my start.

QUESTION: What do you think of Catholic Theatre in this country?

MR. SPEAIGHT: I am very much impressed by it. Of course, I have seen only the work at the Catholic University, but I am impressed with the high standard there. It is an admirable standard—very good, indeed—far above the ordinary amateur standard in England. At no time, in this production of "The Comedian" have I felt that I was acting with amateurs.

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Chiara

(Continued from Page 13)

THOMAS. Yes. You were lost, looking for something you could never find where you sought it. Do you know what it is?

CHIARA [*listlessly*]. Happiness, I guess.

THOMAS. Have you ever been happy?

CHIARA [*thinks a moment, and then her face lights up*]. Once; when the sun came out at the end of a rainy day. There were bars of sunlight streaming through the trees, and making shadows on the grass, and everything was black and green and gold.

THOMAS. It was on a hilltop, wasn't it, and birds were talking in the stillness?

CHIARA. How did you know?

THOMAS. I have stood on that hill myself. Everyone does at least once during his life. You have been looking for it ever since, haven't you?

CHIARA. I had forgotten it until now.

THOMAS. You thought you had. But every time some phantom of pleasure lured you through the marshes, you followed it, hoping it would lead you back to that hill.

CHIARA [*twistfully*]. I would like to be there again, walking through the wet grass in my bare feet. I never asked myself if I were happy then. [*She makes a gesture of helplessness and despair.*] It was long before this . . . this . . .

THOMAS [*sympathetically*]. I know.

CHIARA. Do you really think it is because I cannot find my way back?

THOMAS. I am sure of it. Every time you seek the arms of a lover it is because you love something beyond him.

CHIARA [*impulsively*]. Tell me, what is it? What do I love?

THOMAS. There are many names for it, but men are wisest when they give it no name, and call it the Ineffable. It is the elusive Something we pursue throughout this life and into the next—the Something that gives everything meaning. It is the Finality of which every modicum of pleasure, every bit of happiness we know is but a dim and and sickly reflection. Even the meanest physical pleasure we experience is a reflection of it. Each proximate happiness creates within us a longing for it. That is why we turn so hopefully to whatever truth or goodness or beauty we find in this life—in anticipation of that far-off Perfection.

CHIARA. And I have been looking for God all this time?

THOMAS. As surely as any saint who ever lived.

CHIARA [*ruefully*]. You seem to forget; I am a sinner.

THOMAS. Only because you expected to find Something where there is nothing. You have been loving things for themselves, instead of loving through them the One Good that makes them desirable. Sin is only disordered loving, rejecting Something for Nothing, following a mirage through the desert.

CHIARA. This must be Hades then—the region of shadows.

THOMAS. It is indeed. You have been pursuing shadows and I have been starting at them. [*After a pause.*] Oh, Chiara, can you not see the real reason why I was so wrong to act like that? We are both going the same way, seeking the same thing. We all make this flight to the Infinite, instinctively like geese going south in the twilight of the year. But some see their object more clearly than others. They long for it with a desire more fierce than any the body can know. That is why they build altars and prostrate themselves before them. They are harps that vibrate and tremble under the fingers of God. Their desire consumes them as the flame consumes the candle. This is the passion of the saints.

CHIARA [*almost in a whisper*]. You are a saint!

THOMAS. No, Chiara.

CHIARA. Heaven looks out of your face. Oh, how unworthy I am even to desire you!

THOMAS. Never be ashamed of love, Chiara. It is all part of your desire for God. I am more in love when I hear Mass than you have ever been in your whole life. Do you see now why I have chosen this for my way of life?

CHIARA [*softly*]. Yes; I see.

THOMAS. You must leave me to my life, Chiara.

CHIARA. Oh, I shall! I shall! You have no need of me; you have God. And I tried to take *His* place with you! [*She throws herself at his feet with a little, half-smothered cry, and kisses his scapular repeatedly.*] God Almighty, can You ever forgive me? How You must love this man who is so very much a man! I tried to break him; I tried to break him like a stick of firewood across my knee. It was his strength I loved. I thought it would be wonderful to drag him down to me. But I don't want that now. Oh God, more than anything else I want him to be what I love. I want him to keep his habit white and unsoiled. I want him to stand strong and be free.

[*Thomas raises her to her knees, and with his hands still on her arms, looks into her face and says earnestly.*]

THOMAS. Pray hard, Chiara. Pray that I may be free—free to go to Paris for ordination—free to enslave myself to Christ.

[*Steps sound on the stairs, a key rattles in the lock, the door opens, and Rainoldo enters. He starts when he sees them.*]

RAINOLDO [*sharply*]. Well, Chiara?

THOMAS. What does this mean, Rainoldo?

CHIARA [*going slowly toward the door*]. It means, dear Thomas, that you are free.

[*Rainoldo glares angrily after her, and then at Thomas. Disgustedly, he throws the keys at Thomas' feet and follows Chiara out. The door closes behind them. Thomas picks up the keys, stares at them, and lifts his face heavenward in thanksgiving.*]

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THE NEW BOOKS

"CURTAINS GOING UP," by Albert McCleery and Carl Glick. Pitman Publishing Corporation, New York. \$4.00

IN the American theatre there has arisen a phenomenon of dramatic endeavor. Within two decades there has been established a nation-wide rather than a national theatre. No government subsidy but the earnestness of groups throughout the United States has made this theatre a significant force in American culture.

Some time its history must be recorded. Those whose task it will be to make such a narrative in decades to come will have to reach into the past and consult "*Curtains Going Up*." Herein is contained the struggle and the triumph of artistically minded persons who by mutual cooperation and assistance have created the Little Theatre. Their hopes and despairs, their courage and their fears are all recorded and consequently summon one's gratitude for the splendid task they undertook and fulfilled.

Messrs. McCleery and Glick set out to show that the Little Theatre movement is a popular enterprise. They adequately appraise its activity from coast to coast and from north to south. They then evaluate their findings and prove that the Little Theatre has not only arrived in the United States, that it has not only been welcomed, but that it will remain to become a permanent influence in American drama. They append interesting and practical information regarding the formation and organization of a Community Theatre.

This book is of particular value to those concerned with community theatre endeavor; in fact, it should be required reading for all executives of such groups. At least, it should be found in each community theatre library. It has this additional value that no student of the contemporary theatre can ignore it and consider himself sufficiently informed regarding the modern American theatre. It should be a text-book for all drama schools which are intended to inspire the student body to contribute something significant to the American theatre.

Although one is impressed with the fine and light writing of the book, the well-chosen illustrations, one wonders why such community theatres as the Loyola Community Theatre and the various chapters of the Blackfriars' Guild have been ignored in the survey. Perhaps

Curtains Going Up—McCleery and Glick. \$4.00

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the next edition will include them and thus make "*Curtains Going Up*" a completely definitive work.

B. L.

Once Over

(Continued from Page 6)

of the family, is unhappy in her marriage and contemplating divorce. Ross, a younger brother, has turned to Communism as the only life. The younger members of the family, Hugh and Monica, are bright young sophisticates whose only thought in life is self-indulgence. John, the eldest brother, sacrificing himself as the head of the family, tries to strengthen the bond which serves to hold it together. At the end of the play, the influence of Christina, once deemed destructive to family harmony, is the one force which enables each to find his star. Since early this year, the Little Theatre has been the scene of Friday fortnightly productions. Original scripts, the best of the one-act dramas, and also scenes from many famous plays are enacted before closed audiences.

Playwriting is one of the major activities of our Experimental Theatre. Many students find here an outlet for their latent talents and imaginations.

Soon after beginning the course the young playwrights of the future realize that the first things that have to be learned, and learned thoroughly, are the fundamentals of playwriting. They learn that each play must contain a Basic Emotion; that every play is built on five famous C's—crucible, conflict, circumstances, climax and crisis. From the study of play construction it is

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Blue Sky

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enough for Pittsburgh audiences. Mr. Lavery had become a favorite here after the long run of his "First Legion" in this city. We stressed, too, that here was a play with seventeen scenes of Hawaiian Island background. Practically every dramatic club in the environs patronized us just to see how we'd manage that feat. Again, the audience witnessed a Catholic play, and we didn't fail to mention that fact through the program when they were inside the auditorium.

Our publicity approach to our first production of the coming season, "Glorious Morning," will be that here is a play as modern as the 11 p. m. radio news broadcast. Here is a play laid in a totalitarian state, where individual rights are crushed and democracy is unknown, where all men must salute the State, and where no one is allowed to think for himself. In giving our audience such a play, we are giving them Catholic doctrine through the medium of the theatre.

Groups wishing to produce real Catholic plays should not hesitate. They may find this "blue-sky" approach helpful. Care must be taken, however, that in a flair for striking publicity Truth not be lost. We must not forget that we are Catholics and that for us the end never justifies untruthful means.

Emphasize those features which will attract—but which are true about the play or the production. Do not promise the public something you cannot give them. The fact that a play is Catholic need not be emphasized to any great extent before the audience reaches the auditorium, lest their preconceived notions of, and prejudices against, Catholic plays keep them away. You will not be getting them there under false pretense if you give them everything you publicized. Once they arrive, however, they should know they are witnessing a Catholic play. Dramatic groups at that point must do an interpretive job on the meaning of true Catholic Theatre; at that point they must underscore the merits of a Catholic play.

Needless to say, in this campaign for the establishment of a real Catholic Theatre in this country which in time we hope will be as well recognized as an entity as the Group Theatre, the Moscow Art Theatre, or the Abbey—the Publicity Department must be aided by the finest craftsmanship the actors and production staff can contribute and by the selection of only fine plays. Future sales will be lost—and the cause will be lost—if the box-office customers find they have bought an inferior product because of its attractive wrapping.

Requiescat in Pace

It is our sad task to record in this issue of CATHOLIC THEATRE the passing of the Rev. Vincent S. McDonough, S.J., of Georgetown University, and to express, on behalf of the Catholic Theatre Conference, sincerest condolences to his relatives, friends, the Society of Jesus and the great educational institution which he served so well and faithfully for many years.

Although not actively engaged in the theatre, Father "Mac," as he was affectionately known, was a sincere friend and supporter of Catholic Theatre and was a staunch member of the Catholic Theatre Conference from its inception. He addressed the banquet of the Conference's first convention held in Washington in 1937 and to the end showed deep and helpful interest in its work. May he rest in peace.

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Once Over

(Continued from Page 21)

realized that from the very beginning of the first act everything points-up to the climax, which should be reached at the end of the second act.

Next come unfinished scenarios, which are written only up to the climax. It is indeed surprising the number of situations that can be developed from one assigned scenario. In some, a situation for a male cast is developed, in others a situation for a female cast, and in others, mixed groups are used. When the scenario is written, the play is blocked out, scene by scene and act by act. The writing of dialogue, which follows the scenario writing, is, perhaps, one of the most difficult aspects of playwriting. Pages and pages may be written, much midnight oil burnt, and days spent traveling with pad and pencil, ready at any moment for inspiration. There is, however, a supreme satisfaction, when some really pithy dialogue has been turned out, in knowing that efforts have not been spent in vain, and that the pitfalls awaiting all playwrights have been carefully avoided. The dialogue must not be too technical or too esoterically slangy; a main character carries the play, but the minor characters are just as human and have a definite purpose on the stage.

Another aspect of the Experimental Theatre movement is the Stagecraft unit. When we signed up for stagecraft we didn't know exactly what we were getting into. We had some idea about constructing sets and painting flats, but it was all rather vague in our minds.

The first week we reported for class armed with a smock and a determined air, to do or die. However, we had to content ourselves with drawing sets and flats in perspective on huge sheets of paper. We had some trouble trying to make lines meet way out in space, but we finally completed our assignment.

After several weeks of this, we began work on the set for "The Far-Off Hills." We sawed, and hammered corrugated fasteners into the boards and ran around like mad. Our work was finally completed, but almost immediately we began on the set for "The Joyous Season," which gave us supreme satisfaction when we saw it on the stage.

We also make miniature stages in cardboard cartons, with sets designed for every kind of play. The stagecraft course has been hard work, but its members feel that the time spent was well spent, if they contributed at all to the success of Marywood's experimental theatre.

Education

(Continued from Page 15)

organization with units in various cities of the country. It has been one of the aims of the Guild to create as well as discover Catholic drama, and present the same to the American public.

Like the clergy and the religious of past centuries who used drama to make dull sermons lively, to make theological truth more vivid, to make moral principles more cogent, the Blackfriars' Guild intends to use the drama as a medium of asserting that proper proportion of relations between God and man, man and man, and man and nature. Through the Catholic University of America, the Blackfriars' Guild is afforded not only a competent staff and adequate equipment in the drama school, but furthermore, access to the later and deeper discernment in philosophy and theology which shall give character to the content of the Guild plays.

Furthermore, the Catholic University has endeavored to aid the CATHOLIC THEATRE CONFERENCE in fulfilling its objectives, namely: to promote Catholic truth through dramatic art; to unite Catholic theatres in a Catholic Theatre; to afford service to the members; to establish standards in the Theatre. Without the aid of the Catholic University of America, the CATHOLIC THEATRE CONFERENCE could not have achieved the progress it has already attained to in its two years of existence. Besides the department which the university established under the direction of the Blackfriars' Guild, the university also invited the CATHOLIC THEATRE CONFERENCE to make its national headquarters there.

By reason of such splendid and unselfish cooperation and encouragement on the part of the university, the future of Catholic education as regards the drama will not only be shaped more definitely but will be developed more solidly and effectively. Playwrights and actors, teachers of dramatic art and radio script writers are being trained at the university. But they are not only equipped with technical knowledge of their respective fields, they are further endowed with that perennial philosophy of living which will motivate not only their own lives but also the drama which they will create. As a consequence of their education, the theatre of America, if not the theatre of other nations, will be enriched by a dramatic literature which is neither base nor banal but one which interprets life poetically and poignantly, gay at times and sad occasionally, but always beautiful; a drama which will assert unequivocally and undeniably that life is worth living, which will show as does Catholic education the way to eternal life.

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For Further Details, See November, 1938 CATHOLIC THEATRE

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